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South Viet Nam Coup Blamed On Conflicting American Views

CPYRGHT

THE weekend coup in Saigon was not U.S.-engineered, and it obviously embarrassed U.S. officials from Washington to Viet Nam. Yet it was the direct result of a bitter fight among Americans directly involved in the Viet Nam war.

A strongly pro-U.S., anti-Communist, and anti-neutralist group seized power from a government to which the American government was proclaiming its continued support. The coup was led, in part, by Christian officers, and directed, in part, against Buddhist officials, but it was not a Catholic vs. Buddhist fight.

Buddhist leaders were among the leaders in this move, as they have been in similar moves in the past, because they are determined there shall be no neutralization of Viet Nam. They fear such a development could take place as a result of Washington or Paris action, with the connivance of appeasement-minded Vietnamese.

The Americans are divided over a basic issue: shall South Viet Nam be defended until victory over the Communist aggressors is won, or shall the area be "neutralized" by an accommodation that would let Reds join the South Viet Nam government, but not allow any anti-Communists in the regime in North Viet Nam?

Twice before, in the past year, those Vietnamese of rank who had shown a willingness to accept "neutralization" formulas have been projected into positions from which they could preside over removal of all U.S. and anti-Communist forces from the country. Both times, they were thwarted by their own countrymen — those who oppose any negoti-

ated end to hostilities which would result in subjugation instead of real peace.

The more recent moves against the Khanh regime have been aimed at the American and Vietnamese appeasers, who were again reaching for control of the situation. They were checked, for the moment, by the no-appeasement group. Some of our CIA people are reported to be included in the appeasement camp, and are openly accused by some of our own military men of aiding the anti-Christian propaganda effort, because of the fact the Catholic element is uncompromisingly anti-Communist.

It all adds up to a nasty story, and a nasty situation. The sad fact is that the Saigon troubles are merely the end product of a parallel battle within our own government in Washington. There such men as Adlai Stevenson and George Ball still gag at the word "victory", and a paper by the Board of National Estimates Willard Mathias is circulating among top officials, arguing that victory in Viet Nam is no longer desirable, and appeasement is the only course open.

Senators Morse and Gruening insist it would be best to let the Reds have all of Asia, rather than let any more Americans go to Asia on military missions. The administration replies that official comment on such views might prejudice negotiations now under way about the future of Southeast Asia.

Apparently only the American GI believes the freedom of the South Viet Nam people is defensible, and worth defending. Plus those Vietnamese who keep frustrating our diplomats, that is.